



ADDRESS BY THE MOST DISTINGUISHED GRAND SUMMUS

'Companions, welcome once again to Grand Senatus. You always come in great numbers, but this year you have surpassed yourselves, easily the largest attendance yet and I thank you all for giving up your time to be here. Your enthusiasm for the Order never ceases to amaze me and convinces me that our approach of quality ritual, warm friendship from those at all levels and humour underpinned by a strong social media presence is paying huge dividends. Our total of individual members and memberships is, as usual, comfortably at its greatest ever (something like an 8.5% increase on memberships since last year) and looking at what's on the horizon for the remainder of 2024, this trend will inevitably continue.

'My customary first task is to congratulate those appointed and promoted today, as well as those who received the 4th and 5th grades yesterday. A Grand Rank or Grade promotion is a very special reward for past services, and a lot of people have spent a lot of time in the process. So by all means thank us and buy us a drink but our real joy will be in seeing you redouble your efforts for the Order, especially in terms of introducing your Master Mason friends into the OSM and then encouraging them to continue their progress, through the Princes Degree, to Scarlet Cord.

'Time now for a retrospective of the events of the past 12 months, starting with new Provincial Grand Summi. This year we have only had one change (I must be getting soft in my old age!). Terry Sheern (please stand) has been installed as Provincial Grand Summus for Essex. Terry has replaced Ray Clare (please stand) who retired after a quite exceptional term of office and whom we thank wholeheartedly. There are other changes in the pipeline and a little more of that shortly.

'On the Consecration front, we have been extremely busy: in July 2023, Vale of Pickering No. 144 (in North and East Yorkshire) and Charlemagne No. 145 (to meet in Essex and the Netherlands); in August, Wiivnhou No. 146 (Essex); September saw King Arthur No. 143 (Somerset and Dorset) come into being; and in October Invictus No. 149 (Midland Counties) was added to the roll.

October also saw our now annual pilgrimage to France for the consecration of Burdigala, Lugdunum, Bene Dic and Jerusalem Consistories. Our time in Bordeaux was a mixture of hard work and fabulous entertainment, and we are grateful to our Inspectorate for putting the package together, particularly Pierre Meste for the Masonic side and Jean L'Homme for the hospitality element, both of whom are here today. And talking of special hospitality, we can't forget our short trip to Barbados in March in conjunction with the Mark to confer the 4th and 5th Grades on deserving Companions from all over the Southern Caribbean.

'Now some might reason that things this year would be calming down, but not a bit of it. I think you know me well enough by now to discount that possibility! On 16 May, I'll be consecrating River Thames Consistory No. 152 at Twickenham, and First Light Consistory No. 153 at Great Yarmouth on 21 June. Then in August we're back on the plane for a Consecration in Thailand and one at Kottayam on the south-west coast of India. We'll also be creating an Inspectorate for Eastern India for our three unattached Consistories there, and installing Amit Jyoti Sen as Grand Inspector, installing Rajiv Naik as District Grand Summus for Western India and conferring the 5th Grade in Chennai and Pune. October will see us back in France (Clermont-Ferrand this time) for four, possibly five more Consecrations. And I'm aware that there are other potential Consistories being discussed both here and overseas, Greece are champing at the bit realistically for 2025. As always, details of all these events will appear on our Facebook page and on the weekly newsletter from MMH: Freemasonry@86 News.

'Moving on, I want to briefly talk to you about charity. You will recall that a few years ago we had a very successful challenge appeal for the Alzheimer's Society, raising in excess of £10,000. I think it's time we re-visited dementia support again, and I will be asking Provincial and District Grand Summi to co-ordinate giving from individual Consistories. The Chilterns will, I am led to believe, be directing monies to the Admiral Nurses, a part of Dementia UK who support patients and families in the way Macmillan Nurses do for cancer sufferers. And please also consider donating to the Grand Master's Keystone Fund, either as an individual, a Consistory or a Province or District.

'It's now that time when we welcome our visitors from overseas and Heads of Orders here, and I'll ask you to refrain from applauding until they're all introduced.

From France: V.Dist.Comp. Jean-Philippe Dakhil, V, G.Insp., and V.Dist.Comp. Christian Amine, IV, P.G.Lect.;

From South East Asia: R.Dist.Comp. Derek Shen Leong Lo V, Dist.G.S.;

From Southern Caribbean, Dist.Comp. Errol Erad Clarke, IV, Dep.G.St.B.;

From Southern India: V.Dist.Comp. Bharat Venkat Epur, V, P.G.Reg.;

From Belgium: V.Dist.Comp. Francis Clarembaux, IV, P.G.Lect. – The Brian Wareham Scarlet Cord Consistory TI (Unattached);

From Hong Kong – Walled City Consistory No. 118 (Unattached):

Dist.Comp. Martin Howard Thomas, IV, P.G.Her., and Dist.Comp. John Chung-On Wan, IV.

Heads of Orders here:

From the Mark Degree, Pro Grand Master and P.G.Reg., V.Dist.Comp. John Prizeman, a recipient of the 5th Grade yesterday;

From the Knights Templar, Grand Master and P.Dep.G.S., R.Dist.Comp. Paul Clement;

From the RCC, Grand Sovereign and a recipient of P.G.Chan., R.Dist.Comp. Graham Flight;

From the R & SM, Grand Master and our P.G.Chan., R.Dist.Comp. Kessick Jones;

From the OSM, Grand Supreme Ruler and our former Grand Summus, M.Dist.Comp. Andrew Sweeney;

From the Operatives, 1st Grand Master Mason and a recipient of P.G.Lect., V.Dist.Comp. Dr Paul Mycock;

To them and anyone else we have missed, you are all most welcome.

Companions, our distinguished guests.

'I finish this address, of course, with thanks to a lot of people. Continuing thanks to our Consistory Recorders, Treasurers and DCs who do so much to enable us to enjoy our Scarlet Cord Masonry at a local level, and to our Provincial, District and Inspectorate Heads and their executive teams, whose contributions are immense. Thanks to this year's Grand Officer ceremonial team, the members of which have been quite outstanding in their commitment, as were so many of their predecessors. Especial thanks to retiring Grand Vice Chancellor, Tom Auber, and retiring Grand Chancellor, Kessick Jones, who despite his duties as a fellow Grand Master has been everywhere with us. The Grand Recorder, Dan Heath, has taken up the cudgels apparently seamlessly, but that's only because of much out of hours work. To all the team here at MMH, who we should probably call the Tribe of Dan, with a special word for Chris Griggs who has done much of the work for yesterday and today, and personal thanks to Zsolt Baranya who deals with our event and travel management with incredible efficiency. To our masterful G.D.C. Phillip Purves, who knows so much but still learns something new each year. He now knows that if you're standing outside a Masonic hall built on the side of a steep hill and you have a wheeled suitcase, don't leave it unattended as there is only going to be one inevitable and hilarious consequence. Phillip's deputies this year have been excellent in their duties and the Grand Tzaddikim have added much lustre to our ceremonies as always.

'Finally, a special thank you to those attending Grand Senatus for the first time today, we hope you've enjoyed the experience enough to want to start coming every year from now on!

'The Scarlet Cord is a bright jewel in the crown of Freemasonry because of you, each and every one of you. May the God of our Fathers keep you safe until we meet again. Thank you for listening to these few words.'